

**Speech by Mrs Josephine Teo, Minister for Communications and Information,
at Explore AI (29 Jan 2024)**

1. Thank you Google for hosting me again. I see many colleagues in the audience, and I am happy to be back. Two weeks ago, I was in Davos, Switzerland¹ where I met many colleagues from Google. The activities that the Government has with Google have are all towards a good cause - we are all interested in seeing what AI can do. Not just for companies or industries - but it may sound lofty and overly ambitious - we are interested to see what we can do to help the world.
2. In Davos, unsurprisingly, AI was very high on the agenda. One of the questions around AI is about what we really need to govern it well. For those who have interacted with the Singaporean ecosystem, they notice that in terms of governance, we tend not to just think of it as just regulations. **Regulations are certainly part of good governance**, but in digital, and certainly in AI, we have to make sure there is **good infrastructure** to support the activities.
3. So, when we put forward our refreshed National AI Strategy, we felt that the activity drivers of industry, research, and government can only push far ahead if supported within the context of that infrastructure. Such infrastructure would include having the compute and tools available, and the various governance frameworks in place. So, the infrastructure and utilities, which go along with that infrastructure, are absolutely essential.
4. Another very important aspect of good governance is in **building capabilities**. By this, we are talking about capabilities within industries, companies, and people. It is next to impossible to have AI deployed across many different sectors if you do not have the people to help make that a reality.
5. **Partnerships** is yet another important aspect of good governance. We partner for inclusion. Inclusion means making sure that people not only have access to the tools, but they are provided with opportunities to grow the skills that will enable them to use these tools well. It also means partnering to learn together. AI Verify is a very good example. If we want to be able to put in place practical testing tools, we need to figure out - when companies deploy the AI systems and use these testing tools, what are they learning and how can we improve the way in which these tools are designed and deployed? Of course, partnership also extends to partnering with other governments. And that is what we are attempting to do later this week with our colleagues in the ASEAN family², but also at the global level.
6. The reason I am sharing all this today, is that today's major milestone for Trailblazers actually ticks all of the boxes that I described - the power of good governance; bringing together the infrastructure, utilities, and tools; building enterprise and people capabilities; trying to understand

¹ Minister Teo was in Davos, Switzerland for the World Economic Forum 2024.

² At the ASEAN Digital Ministers' Meeting on 1-2 Feb 2024.



how you can be inclusive and yet, at the same time, responsible in the way we implement AI; the idea of us all learning together. So, I really want to thank Google for making this happen and for partnering with us so enthusiastically.

7. As with all government efforts, we always ask ourselves - what has been the biggest payoff in these projects? And I attempted to do the same for Trailblazers. When we started, we wanted to be able to see 100 projects within 100 days. That was achieved easily as we had no problem getting 100 projects. The next question you ask – are the projects able to become Minimum Viable Products (MVP)? And the answer is, yes. In fact, in the short period of just about six months, 46 of them have in fact built an MVPs.
8. Among the several teams that I visited, I came across this very interesting one by Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP). I used to serve on the Board of NYP, so I was quite intrigued by the idea that generative AI potentially can help instructors design curriculum courses that respond to the industry needs for their students' benefit. For those of us who have been involved with institutes of higher learning, we know that designing a course and pulling together a curriculum usually takes months; but in the field of IT, many changes can take place in six months. Hence, this new tool can potentially enable the instructors to quickly get a sense of what is happening in the field that they are required to instruct in, and then to put together a course design together with the course materials that are needed to achieve the learning outcomes.
9. The other project that caught my attention was by Doctor Anywhere. As a patient, you may need to see a specialist, but first you have to identify the right specialist; for that to happen, it would usually often depend on an agent who would advise you depending on your own medical history and insurance programme. Hence, Doctor Anywhere started working on the Trailblazers project to see whether they could overcome difficulties that patients have in accessing specialist referral services. With the use of a generative AI tool, Doctor Anywhere can now be Doctor Anytime, that is to be offered anytime, 24/7, when the patient needs it.
10. With Generative AI, NYP can potentially benefit from time savings and enhanced currency in their curriculum to the students. With Doctor Anywhere, they experienced enhancements to customer experience and being helpful to patients who feel a sense of anxiety. For these things, how do we quantify the benefits? How do we measure their value and their impact? The truth is, it is not so easy. It is not so easy to measure the value of improved patient satisfaction, and it is not so easy to quantify how much more beneficial it is for every graduating cohort of students to come out into the workforce with more relevant skills than they did before. But still, we must try. We did a modest assessment based on just the graduating industry projects from Trailblazers, and found that in terms of time savings and greater efficiency, the estimate is in excess of \$10 million savings annually.
11. Now, I am very happy to say that with the help and support of our colleagues in the EDB that have fast tracked their assessment, we can move ahead with Trailblazer 2.0, which is at least 1.5 times bigger than the current programme. With that, we could very modestly say that the potential time



savings will definitely exceed the current run. But beyond the dollar value is the idea that we are building up very quickly this capacity within Singapore, and the imagination and interest to use the tools of Generative AI to significantly improve and transform the way business is done and enhance customer satisfaction by helping employees do a better job. So, I see all of this as really being very beneficial for how we are trying to grow the AI ecosystem here.

12. On that note, thank you once again for inviting me. I want to congratulate all of the Trailblazers graduates, and the 'Transformation Award' winners and 'Innovation Award' winners.

13. Thank you.

